RRR
ROTHBARD-ROCKWELL REPORT
SPECIAL ISSUE
MARCH 1992 VOLUME III, NUMBER 3

A Strategy for the Right

by Murray N. Rothbard

Presidential Address to the John Randolph Club, Herndon, Virginia, January 18, 1992

This is a triple celebration. First, we celebrate the death and disintegration in 1991 of one of the most monstrous despotisms of all time, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Typically, the only people mourning the death are not in the old Soviet Union, but George Bush, the *New York Times*, and the Establishment in the United States, including our Sovietologists. No longer will George Bush be able to pick up the phone, call Gorby on the hot line, and settle the problems of the world. Now, isn't that a crying shame?

The second celebration is mine personally: my own return home to the Right-wing, after 35 years in the political wilderness. Like a 19th-century Romantic hero, I am confident that I am returning home at a higher level than when I departed.

And third, this, only the *second* annual meeting of the John Randolph Club, celebrates the fact that we have suddenly vaulted from the periphery to a central role in the American Right. The occasion of this dramatic change, of course, has been the entry into the presidential race of our esteemed Randolph Club member, Patrick J. Buchanan. As Sidney Blumenthal puts it in the January 6-13 issue of the *New Republic*—he speaks of the magazine *Chronicles* but this applies equally well to the Randolph Club—: "*Chronicles*, which was on the periphery of conservatism under Reagan, has become suddenly engaged at its center as the Bush-Buchanan race looms."

What has happened is that what I call the Old Right is suddenly back! The terms old and new inevitably get confusing, with a new "new" every few years, so let's call it the "*Original*" Right, the Right-wing as it existed from 1933 to approximately 1955. This Old Right was formed in reaction against the New Deal, and against the Great Leap Forward into the Leviathan state that was the essence of that New Deal.

We have suddenly vaulted from the periphery to a central role i Americ Right.

This anti-New Deal movement was a coalition of three groups: 1) the "extremists," the individualists and libertarians, like H.L. Mencken, Albert Jay Nock, Rose Wilder Lane, and Garet Garrett; 2) Right-wing Democrats, harking back to the laissez-faire views of the 19th-century Democratic party, men such as Governor Albert Ritchie of Maryland or Senator James A. Reed of Missouri; and 3) moderate New Dealers, who thought that the Roosevelt New Deal went too far, for example Herbert Hoover. Interestingly, even though the libertarian intellectuals were in the minority, they necessarily set the terms and the rhetoric of the debate, since theirs was the only thought-out contrasting ideology to the New Deal.

The most radical view of the New Deal was that of libertarian essayist and novelist Garet Garrett, an editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*. His brilliant little pamphlet *The Revolution Was*,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

published in 1938, began with these penetrating words—words that would never be fully absorbed by the Right:

> There are those who still think they are holding the pass against a revolution that may be coming up the road. But they are gazing in the wrong direction. The revolution is behind them. It went by in the night of depression, singing songs to freedom.

The revolution was, said Garrett, and therefore nothing less than a counter-revolution is needed to take the country back. Behold, then, not a "conservative," but a *radical* Right.

In the late 1930s, there was added to this reaction against the domestic New Deal, a reaction against the foreign policy of the New Deal: the insistent drive toward war in Europe and Asia. Hence, the Right wing added a reaction against big government abroad to the attack on big government at home. The one fed on the other. The Right wing called for non-intervention in foreign as well as domestic affairs, and denounced FDR's adoption of Woodrow Wilson's Global Crusading which had proved so disastrous in World War I. To Wilson-Roosevelt globalism, the Old Right countered with a policy of America First. American foreign policy must neither be based on the interests of a foreign power—such as Great Britain—nor be in the service of such abstract ideals as "making the world safe for democracy," or waging a "war to end all wars," both of which would amount, in the prophetic words of Charles A. Beard, to waging "perpetual war for perpetual peace."

And so the original Right was completed, combating the Leviathan state in domestic affairs. It said "no!" to the welfare-warfare state. The result of adding foreign affairs to the list was some reshuffling of members: former Rightists such as Lewis W. Douglas, who had opposed the domestic New Deal, now rejoined it as internationalists; while veteran isolationists, which as Senators Borah and Nye, or intellectuals such as Beard, Harry Elmer Barnes, or John T. Flynn, gradually but surely became *domestic* Right wingers in the course of their determined opposition to the foreign New Deal.

The revolution *was*, and therefore nothing less than a counter-revolution is needed to take the country back.

If we know what the Old Right was against, what were they *for*? In general terms, they were for a restoration of the liberty of the Old Republic, of a government strictly limited to the defense of the rights of private property. In the concrete, as in the case of any broad coalition, there were differences of opinion within this overall framework. But we can boil down those differences to this question: how much of existing government would you repeal? How far would you roll government back?

The *minimum* demand which almost all Old Rightists agreed on, which virtually defined the Old Right, was total abolition of the New Deal, the whole kit and kaboodle of the welfare state, the Wagner Act, the Social Security Act, going off gold in 1933, and all the rest. Beyond that, there were charming disagreements. Some would stop at repealing the New Deal. Others would press on, to abolition of Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom, including the Federal Reserve System and especially that mighty instrument of tyranny, the income tax and the Internal Revenue Service. Still others, extremists such as myself, would not stop until we repealed the Federal Judiciary Act of 1789, and maybe even think the unthinkable and restore the good old Articles of Confederation.

Here I should stop and say that, contrary to accepted myth, the original Right did not disappear with, and was not discredited by, our entry into World War II. On the contrary, the congressional elections of 1942—an election neglected by scholars--was a significant victory not only for conservative

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Republicans, but for isolationist Republicans as well. Even though intellectual Rightist opinion, in books and especially in the journals, was virtually blotted out during World War II, the Right was still healthy in politics and in the press, such as the Hearst press, the New York *Daily News*, and especially the *Chicago Tribune*. After World War II, there was an intellectual revival of the Right, and the Old Right stayed healthy until the mid-1950s.

Within the overall consensus, then, on the Old Right, there were many differences within the framework, but differences that remained remarkably friendly and harmonious. Oddly enough, these are precisely the friendly differences within the current paleo movement: free trade or protective tariff, immigration policy, and, within the policy of "isolationism," whether it should be "doctrinaire" isolationism, such as my own, or whether the United States should regularly intervene in the Western Hemisphere or in neighboring countries of Latin America. Or whether this nationalist policy should be flexible among these various alternatives.

There was admirable diversity and freedom of discussion on the Old Right. There was no *National Review*.

Other differences, which also still exist, are more philosophical: should we be Lockians, Hobbesians, or Burkeans: natural rightsers, or traditionalists, or utilitarians? On political frameworks, should we be monarchists, check-and-balance federalists, or radical decentralists? Hamiltonians or Jeffersonians?

One difference, which agitated the Right-wing before the Buckleyite monolith managed to stifle all debate, is particularly relevant to Right-wing strategy, my main topic for tonight. The Marxists, who have spent a great deal of time thinking about strategy for their movement, always pose the question: who is the agency of social change? Which group may be expected to bring about the desired change in society? Classical Marxism found the answer easy: the proletariat. Then things got a lot more complicated: the peasantry, oppressed womanhood, minorities, etc.

The relevant question for the Right-wing is the other side of the coin: who can we expect to be the *bad guys*? Who are agents of *negative* social change? Or: which groups in society pose the greatest threats to liberty? Basically, there have been two answers on the Right: 1) the unwashed masses; and 2) the power elites. I will return to this question in a minute.

On the differences of opinion, of the question of diversity in the Old Right, I was struck by a remark that Tom Fleming made. Tom noted that he was struck, in reading about that period, that there was no party line, that there was no person or magazine excommunicating heretics, that there was admirable diversity and freedom of discussion on the Old Right. Amen! In other words, there was no *National Review*.

What was the Old Right position on culture? There was no particular position, because everyone was imbued with, and loved the old culture. Culture was not an object of debate, either on the Old Right or, for that matter, anywhere else. Of course, they would have been horrified and incredulous at the accredited victimology that has rapidly taken over our culture. Anyone who would have suggested to an Old Rightist of 1950, for example, that in forty years, the federal courts would be redrawing election districts all over the country so that Hispanics would be elected according to their quota in the population, would have been considered a fit candidate for the loony-bin. As well he might.

And while I'm on this topic, this is the year 1992, and no sooner have I been installed as President when I am going to exceed my constitutional limits. I propose to commit the John Randolph Club, right now, to one simple proposition. I am tempted to say, repeat after me:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COLUMBUS DISCOVERED AMERICA!

Even though a fan of diversity, the only revisionism I will permit on this topic is whether Columbus discovered America, or whether it was Amerigo Vespucci.

Poor Italian-Americans! They have never been able to make it to accredited victim status. The only thing they ever got was Columbus Day. And now, they're trying to take it away!

If I may be pardoned a personal note, I joined the Old Right in 1946. I grew up in New York City in the 1930s in the midst of what can only be called a communist culture. As middle-class Jews in New York, my relatives, friends, classmates, and neighbors faced only one great moral decision in their lives: should they join the Communist Party and devote 100 percent of their lives to the cause; or should they remain fellow travelers and devote only a fraction of their lives? That was the great range of debate.

I had two sets of aunts and uncles on both sides of the family who were in the Communist Party. The older uncle was an engineer who helped build the legendary Moscow subway; the younger one was an editor for the Communist-dominated Drug Workers Union, headed by one of the famous Foner brothers. But I hasten to add that I am *not*, in the current fashion, like Roseanne Barr Arnold or William F. Buckley, Jr., claiming that I was a victim of child abuse. (Buckley's claim is that he was the victim of the high crime of insouciant anti-Semitism at his father's dinner table.)

On the contrary, my father was an individualist, and was always strongly anti-communist and anti-socialist, who turned against the New Deal in 1938 because it had failed to correct the depression—a pretty good start. In my high school and college career, at Columbia University, I never met a Republican, much less anyone strongly Right-wing.

By the way, even though I am admittedly several years younger than Daniel Bell, Irving Kristol, and the rest, I must say that during all those years I never heard of Leon Trotsky, much less of Trotskyites, until I got to graduate school after World War II. I was fairly politically aware, and in New York in those days, the "Left" meant the Communist Party, period. So I think that Kristol and the rest are weaving pretty legends about the cosmic importance of the debates between Trotskyites and Stalinists in alcoves A and B at the City College cafeteria. As far as I'm concerned, the only Trotskyites were a handful of academics. By the way, there is a perceptive saying in Left-wing circles in New York: that the Trotskyites all went into academia, and the Stalinists went into real estate. Perhaps that's why the Trotskyites are running the world.

I am *not* like Roseanne Barr Arnold or William F. Buckley, Jr., claiming that I was a victim of child abuse.

At Columbia College, I was only one of two Republicans on the entire campus, the other being a literature major with whom I had little in common. Not only that: but, a remarkable thing for a cosmopolitan place like Columbia, Lawrence Chamberlain, distinguished political scientist, and dean of Columbia college, admitted one time that *he* had never met a Republican either.

By 1946, I had become politically active, and joined the Young Republicans of New York. Unfortunately, the Republicans in New York weren't much of an improvement: the Dewey-Rockefeller forces constituted the extreme Right of the party; most of them being either pro-Communist, like Stanley Isaacs, or social democrats like Jacob Javits. I did, however, have fun writing a paper for the Young Republicans denouncing price control and rent control. And after the Republican capture of Congress in 1946, I was ecstatic. My first publication ever was a "hallelujah!" letter in the *New York World-Telegram* exulting that now, at last, the Republican 80th Congress would repeal the entire New Deal. So much for my strategic acumen in 1946.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At any rate, I found the Old Right and was happy there for a decade. For a couple of years, I was delighted to subscribe to the *Chicago Tribune*, whose every news item was filled with great Old Right punch and analysis. It is forgotten now that the only organized opposition to the Korean War was not on the Left, which, except for the Communist Party and I.F. Stone, fell for the chimera of Wilsonian-Rooseveltian "collective security," but was on the so-called extreme Right, particularly in the House of Representatives.

One of the leaders was my friend Howard Buffett, Congressman from Omaha, who was a pure libertarian and was Senator Taft's midwestern campaign manger at the monstrous Republican convention of 1952, when the Eisenhower-Wall Street cabal stole the election from Robert Taft. After that, I left the Republican Party, only to return this year for the Buchanan campaign. During the 1950s, I joined every Right-wing third party I could find, most of which collapsed after the first meeting. I supported the last presidential thrust of the Old Right, the Andrews-Werdel ticket in 1956, but unfortunately, they never made it up to New York City.

After this excursion on my personal activity in the Old Right, I return to a key strategic question: who are the major bad guys, the unwashed masses or the power elite? Very early, I concluded that the big danger is the elite, and not the masses, and for the following reasons.

First, even granting for a moment that the masses are the worst possible, that they are perpetually Hell-bent on lynching anyone down the block, the mass of people simply don't have the time for politics or political shenanigans. The average person must spend most of his time on the daily business of life, on making a living, being with his family, seeing his friends, etc. He can only get interested in politics or engage in it sporadically.

The only people who have *time* for politics are the professionals: the bureaucrats, politicians, and special interest groups dependent on political rule. They make money out of politics, and so they are intensely interested, and lobby and are active twenty-four hours a day. Therefore, these special interest groups will tend to win out over the uninterested masses. This is the basic insight of the Public Choice school of economics. The only other groups interested full-time in politics are ideologists like ourselves, again not a very large segment in the population. So the problem is the ruling elite, the professionals, and their dependent special interest groups.

Why does the majority of the public obey these turkeys, anyway?

A second crucial point: society is divided into a ruling elite, which is necessarily a minority of the population, which lives off the second group—the rest of the population. Here I point to one of the most brilliant essays on political philosophy ever written, John C. Calhoun's *Disquisition on Government*.

Calhoun pointed out that the very fact of government and of taxation creates inherent conflict between two great classes: those who pay taxes, and those who live off them; the net taxpayers vs. the tax-consumers. The bigger government gets, Calhoun noted, the greater and more intense the conflict between those two social classes. By the way, I've never thought of Governor Pete Wilson of California as a distinguished political theorist, but the other day he said something, presumably unwittingly, that was remarkably Calhounian. Wilson lamented that the tax-*recipients* in California were beginning to outnumber the tax-*payers*. Well, it's a start.

If a minority of elites rule over, tax, and exploit the majority of the public, then this brings up starkly the main problem of political theory: what I like to call the mystery of civil obedience. Why does the majority of the public obey these turkeys, anyway? This problem, I believe, was solved by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

three great political theorists, mainly but not all libertarian: Etienne de la Boetie, French libertarian theorist of the mid-16th century; David Hume; and Ludwig von Mises. They pointed out that, precisely because the ruling class is a minority, that in the long run, force *per se* cannot rule. Even in the most despotic dictatorship, the government can only persist when it is backed by the majority of the population. In the long run, ideas, not force, rule, and any government has to have legitimacy in the minds of the public.

In the long run, ideas, not force, rule, and any government has to have legitimacy in the minds of the public.

This truth was starkly demonstrated in the collapse of the Soviet Union last year. Simply put, when the tanks were sent to capture Yeltsin, they were persuaded to turn their guns around and defend Yeltsin and the Russian Parliament instead. More broadly, it is clear that the Soviet government had totally lost legitimacy and support among the public. To a libertarian, it was a particularly wonderful thing to see unfolding before our very eyes, the death of a state, particularly a monstrous one such as the Soviet Union. Toward the end, Gorby continued to issue decrees as before, but now, no one paid any attention. The once-mighty Supreme Soviet continued to meet, but nobody bothered to show up. How glorious!

But we still haven't solved the mystery of civil obedience. If the ruling elite is taxing, looting, and exploiting the public, why does the public put up with this for a single moment? Why does it take them so long to withdraw their consent?

Here we come to the solution: the critical role of the intellectuals, the opinion-molding class in society. If the masses knew what was going on, they would withdraw their consent quickly: they would soon perceive that the emperor has no clothes, that they are being ripped off. That is where the intellectuals come in.

The ruling elite, whether it be the monarchs of yore or the Communist parties of today, are in desperate need of intellectual elites to weave *apologias* for state power. The state rules by divine edict; the state insures the common good or the general welfare; the state protects us from the bad guys over the mountain; the state guarantees full employment; the state activates the multiplier effect; the state insures social justice, and on and on. The *apologias* differ over the centuries; the effect is always the same. As Karl Wittfogel shows in his great work, *Oriental Despotism*, in Asian empires the intellectuals were able to get away with the theory that the emperor or pharaoh was himself divine. If the ruler is God, few will be induced to disobey or question his commands.

We can see what the state rulers get out of their alliance with the intellectuals; but what do the intellectuals get out of it? The answer should be obvious. Intellectuals are the sort of people who believe that, in the free market, they are getting paid far less than their wisdom requires. Now the state is willing to pay them salaries, both for apologizing for state power, and in the modern state, for staffing the myriad jobs in the welfare, regulatory state apparatus.

In past centuries, the churches have constituted the exclusive opinion-molding classes in the society. Hence the importance to the state and its rulers of an established church, and the importance to libertarians of the concept of separating church and state, which really means not allowing the state to confer upon one group a monopoly of the opinion-molding function. In the twentieth century, of course, the church has been replaced in its opinion-molding role, or, in that lovely phrase, the "engineering of consent," by a swarm of intellectuals, academics, social scientists, technocrats, policy scientists, social workers, journalists and the media generally, and on and on. Often included, for old times' sake, so to speak, is a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sprinkling of social gospel ministers and counselors from the mainstream churches.

So, to sum up: the problem is that the bad guys, the ruling classes, have gathered unto themselves the intellectual and media elites, who are able to bamboozle the masses into consenting to their rule, to indoctrinate them, as the Marxists would say, with "false consciousness." What can we, the Right-wing opposition, do about it?

One strategy, endemic to libertarians and classical liberals, is what we can call the "Hayekian" model, after F.A. Hayek, or what I have called "educationism." Ideas, the model declares, are crucial, and ideas filter down a hierarchy, beginning with top philosophers, then seeping down to lesser philosophers, then academics, and finally to journalists and politicians, and then to the masses. The thing to do is to convert the top philosophers to the correct ideas, they will convert the lesser, and so on, in a kind of "trickle-down effect," until, at last, the masses are converted and liberty has been achieved.

The proper course for the Right-wing opposition must be a strategy of boldness and confrontation, of dynamism and excitement.

First, it should be noted that this trickle-down strategy is a very gentle and genteel one, relying on quiet mediation and persuasion in the austere corridors of intellectual cerebration. This strategy fits, by the way, with Hayek's personality, for Hayek is not exactly known as an intellectual gut-fighter.

Of course, ideas and persuasion are important, but there are several fatal flaws in the Hayekian strategy. First, of course, the strategy at best will take several hundred years, and some of us are a bit more impatient than that. But time is by no means the only problem. Many people have noted, for example, mysterious blockages of the trickle. Thus, most real scientists have a very different view of such environmental questions as Alar than that of a few Left-wing hysterics, and yet somehow it is always the same few hysterics that are exclusively quoted by the media. The same applies to the vexed problem of inheritance and IQ testing. So how come the media invariably skew the result, and pick and choose the few Leftists in the field? Clearly, because the media, especially the respectable and influential media, begin, and continue, with a strong Left-liberal bias.

More generally, the Hayekian trickle-down model overlooks a crucial point: that, and I hate to break this to you, intellectuals, academics, and the media are not all motivated by truth alone. As we have seen, the intellectual classes may be part of the solution, but also they are a big part of the problem. For, as we have seen, the intellectuals are part of the ruling class, and their economic interests, as well as their interests in prestige, power, and admiration, are wrapped up in the present welfare-warfare state system.

Therefore, in addition to converting intellectuals to the cause, the proper course for the Right-wing opposition must necessarily be a strategy of boldness and confrontation, of dynamism and excitement, a strategy, in short, of rousing the masses from their slumber and exposing the arrogant elites that are ruling them, controlling them, taxing them, and ripping them off.

Another alternative Right-wing strategy is that commonly pursued by many libertarian or conservative think tanks: that of quiet persuasion, not in the groves of academe, but in Washington, D.C., in the corridors of power. This has been called the "Fabian" strategy, with think tanks issuing reports calling for a two percent cut in a tax here, or a tiny drop in a regulation there. The supporters of this strategy often point to the success of the Fabian Society, which, by its detailed empirical researches, gently pushed the British state into a gradual accretion of socialist power.

The flaw here, however, is that what works to *increase* state power does not work in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reverse. For the Fabians were gently nudging the ruling elite precisely in the direction they wanted to travel anyway. Nudging the *other* way would go strongly against the state's grain, and the result is far more likely to be the state's co-opting and Fabianizing the think-tankers themselves rather than the other way around. This sort of strategy may, of course, be personally very pleasant for the think-tankers, and maybe profitable in cushy jobs and contracts from the government. But that is precisely the problem.

It is important to realize that the establishment doesn't want excitement in politics, it wants torpor, it wants the masses to continue to be lulled to sleep. It wants kinder, gentler, it wants the measured, judicious, mushy tone, and content, of a James Reston, a David Broder, or a "Washington Week in Review." It *doesn't* want a Pat Buchanan, not only for the excitement and hard edge of his content, but also for his similar tone and style.

The proper strategy for the Right-wing must be what we can call "Right-wing populism?"

And so the proper strategy for the Right-wing must be what we can call "Right-wing populism": exciting, dynamic, tough, and confrontational, rousing, and inspiring not only the exploited masses, but the often shell-shocked Right-wing intellectual cadre as well. And in this era where the intellectual and media elites are all establishment liberal-conservatives, all in a deep sense one variety or another of social democrat, all bitterly hostile to a genuine Right, we need a dynamic, charismatic leader who has the ability to short-circuit the media elites, and to reach and rouse the masses directly. We need a leadership that can reach the masses and cut through the crippling and distorting hermeneutical fog spread by the media elites. We need, in short, the leadership of Patrick J. Buchanan.

But can we call such a strategy "conservative?" I, for one, am tired of the liberal strategy, on which they have rung the changes for forty years, of presuming to define "conservatism" as a supposed aid to the conservative movement. Whenever liberals have encountered hard-edged abolitionists who, for example, have wanted to repeal the New Deal or Fair Deal, they say "but that's not *genuine* conservatism. That's *radicalism*." The *genuine* conservative, these liberals go on to say, doesn't want to repeal or abolish anything. He is a kind and gentle soul who wants to *conserve* what Left-liberals have accomplished.

The Left-liberal vision, then, of *good* conservatives is as follows: first, Left-liberals, in power, make a Great Leap Forward toward collectivism; then, when, in the course of the political cycle, four or eight years later, conservatives come to power, they of course are horrified at the very idea of *repealing* anything; they simply *slow* down the rate of growth of statism, consolidating the previous gains of the left, and providing a bit of R&R for the next liberal Great Leap Forward. And if you think about it, you will see that this is precisely what every Republican administration has done since the New Deal. Conservatives have readily played the desired Santa Claus role in the liberal vision of history.

I would like to ask: how long are we going to keep being suckers? How long will we keep playing our appointed roles in the scenario of the Left? When are we going to stop playing their game, and start throwing over the table?

I must admit that, in one sense, the liberals have had a point. The word "conservative" is unsatisfactory. The original Right never used the term "conservative": we called ourselves individualists, or "true liberals," or Rightists. The word "conservative" only swept the board after the publication of Russell Kirk's highly influential *Conservative Mind* in 1953, in the last years of the original Right.

There are two major problems with the world "conservative." First, that it indeed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

connotes conserving the status quo, which is precisely why the Brezhnevites were called "conservatives" in the Soviet Union. Perhaps there was a case for calling us "conservatives" in 1910, but surely not now. Now we want to uproot the status quo, not conserve it. And secondly, the word conservative harks back to struggles in 19th-century Europe, and in America conditions and institutions have been so different that the term is seriously misleading. There is a strong case here, as in other areas, for what has been called "American exceptionalism."

So what should we call ourselves? I haven't got an easy answer, but perhaps we could call ourselves radical reactionaries, or "radical Rightists," the label that was given to us by our enemies in the 1950s. Or, if there is too much objection to the dread term "radical," we can follow the suggestion of some of our group to call ourselves "the Hard Right." Any of these terms is preferable to "conservative," and it also serves the function of separating ourselves out from the official conservative movement which, as I shall note in a minute, has been largely taken over by our enemies.

It is instructive to turn now to a prominent case of Right-wing populism headed by a dynamic leader who appeared in the last years of the original Right, and whose advent, indeed, marked a transition between the original and the newer, Buckleyite Right. Quick now: who was the most hated, the most smeared man in American politics in this century, more hated and reviled than even David Duke, even though he was not a Nazi or a Ku Kluxer? He was not a libertarian, he was not an isolationist, he was not *even* a conservative, but in fact was a moderate Republican. And yet, he was so universally reviled that his very name became a generic dictionary synonym for evil.

I refer, of course, to Joe McCarthy. The key to the McCarthy phenomenon was the comment made by the entire political culture, from moderate Left to moderate Right: "we agree with McCarthy's *goals*, we just disagree with his *means*." Of course, McCarthy's goals were the usual ones absorbed from the political culture: the alleged necessity of waging war against an international communist conspiracy whose tentacles reached from the Soviet Union and spanned the entire globe. McCarthy's problem, and ultimately his tragedy, is that he took this stuff seriously; if communists and their agents and fellow travelers are everywhere, then shouldn't we, in the midst of the Cold War, root them out of American political life?

Quick now: who was the most hated, the most smeared man in American politics in this century.

The unique and the glorious thing about McCarthy was not his goals or his ideology, but precisely his radical, populist *means*. For McCarthy was able, for a few years, to short-circuit the intense opposition of all the elites in American life: from the Eisenhower-Rockefeller administration to the Pentagon and the military-industrial complex to liberal and Left media and academic elites—to overcome all that opposition and reach and inspire the masses directly. And he did it through television, and without any real movement behind him; he had only a guerrilla band of a few advisers, but no organization and no infrastructure.

Fascinatingly enough, the response of the intellectual elites to the spectre of McCarthyism was led by liberals such as Daniel Bell and Seymour Martin Lipset, who are now prominent neoconservatives. For, in this era, the neocons were in the midst of the long march which was to take them from Trotskyism to Right-wing Trotskyism to Right-wing social democracy, and finally to the leadership of the conservative movement. At this stage of their hegira the neo-cons were Truman-Humphrey-Scoop Jackson liberals.

The major intellectual response to McCarthyism was a book edited by Daniel Bell,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The New American Right (1955), later updated and expanded to *The Radical Right* (1963), published at a time when McCarthyism was long gone and it was necessary to combat a new menace, the John Birch Society. The basic method was to divert attention from the *content* of the radical Right message and direct attention instead to a personal smear of the groups on the Right.

The classical, or *Hard*, Marxist method of smearing opponents of socialism or communism was to condemn them as agents of monopoly capital or of the bourgeoisie. While these charges were wrong, at least they had the virtue of clarity and even a certain charm, compared to the later tactics of the *soft* Marxists and liberals of the 1950s and 60s, who engaged in Marxo-Freudian psychobabble to infer, in the name of psychological "science," that their opponents were, well, kind of *crazy*.

The *soft* Marxists and liberals of the 1950s and 60s engaged in Marxo-Freudian psychobabble.

The preferred method of the time was invented by one of the contributors to the Bell volume, and also one of my least favorite distinguished American historians, Professor Richard Hofstadter. In Hofstadter's formulation, *any* radical dissenters from any status quo, be they Rightists or Leftists, engage in a "paranoid" style (and you know, of course, what *paranoids* are), and suffer from "status anxiety."

Logically, at any time there are three and only three social groups: those who are *declining* in status, those who are *rising* in status, and those whose status is about even. (You can't fault *that* analysis!) The declining groups are the ones whom Hofstadter focused on for the neurosis of status anxiety, which causes them to lash out irrationally at their betters in a paranoid style, and you can fill in the rest. But, of course, the *rising* groups can also suffer from the anxiety of trying to *keep* their higher status, and the level groups can be anxious about a future decline. The result of this hocus-pocus is a non-falsifiable, universally valid theory that can be trotted out to smear and dispose of *any* person or group which dissents from the status quo. For who, after all, wants to be, or to associate with, paranoids and the status anxious?

Also permeating the Bell volume is dismissal of these terrible radicals as suffering from the "politics of resentment." It is interesting, by the way, how Left-liberals deal with political anger. It's a question of semantics. Anger by the good guys, the accredited victim groups, is designated as "rage," which is somehow noble: the latest example was the *rage* of organized feminism in the Clarence Thomas/Willie Smith incidents. On the other hand, anger by designated *oppressor* groups is not called "rage," but "resentment": which conjures up evil little figures, envious of their betters, skulking around the edges of the night.

And indeed the entire Bell volume is permeated by a frank portrayal of the noble, intelligent ivy-league governing elite, confronted and harassed by a mass of odious, uneducated, redneck, paranoid, resentment-filled authoritarian working and middle class types in the heartland, trying irrationally to undo the benevolent rule of wise elites concerned for the public good.

History, however, was not very kind to Hofstadterian liberalism. For Hofstadter and the others were consistent: they were defending what they considered a wonderful status quo of elite rule, from *any* radicals whatever, be they Right or Left. And so, Hofstadter and his followers went back through American history tarring all radical dissenters from any status quo with the status anxious, paranoid brush, including such groups as progressives, populists, and Northern abolitionists before the Civil War.

At the same time, Bell, in 1960, published a once-famous work proclaiming the *End of Ideology:* from now on, consen-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sus elitist liberalism would rule forever, ideology would disappear, and all political problems would be merely technical ones, such as which machinery to use to clear the streets. (Foreshadowing thirty years later, a similar neocon proclamation of the *End of History*.) But shortly afterwards, ideology came back with a bang, with the radical civil rights and then the New Left revolutions, part of which, I am convinced, was in reaction to these arrogant liberal doctrines. Smearing radicals, at least *Left wing* ones, was no longer in fashion, either in politics or in historiography.

Resentment! Why should anyone, *in his right mind*, resent contemporary America?

Meanwhile, of course, poor McCarthy was undone, partly because of the smears, and the lack of a movement infrastructure, and partly too because his populism, even though dynamic, had no goals and no program whatsoever, except the very narrow one of rooting out communists. And partly, too, because McCarthy was not really suited for the television medium he had ridden to fame: being a "hot" person in a "cool" medium, with his jowls, his heavy five-o'-clock shadow (which also helped ruin Nixon), and his lack of a sense of humor. And also, too, since he was neither a libertarian nor really a radical Rightist, McCarthy's heart was broken by the censure of the U.S. Senate, an institution which he actually loved.

The original Right, the radical Right, had pretty much disappeared by the time of the second edition of the Bell volume in 1963, and in a minute we shall see why. But now, all of a sudden, with the entry of Pat Buchanan into the presidential race, my God, they're back! The radical Right is back, all over the place, feistier than ever and getting stronger!

The response to this historic phenomenon, by the entire spectrum of established and correct thought, by the all the elites from left over to Official conservatives and neo-conservatives, is very much like the reaction to the return of Godzilla in the old movies. And wouldn't you know that they would trot out the old psychobabble, as well as the old smears of bigotry, anti-Semitism, the specter of Franco, and all the rest? Every interview with, and article on, Pat dredges his "authoritarian Catholic" background (ooh!) and the fact that he fought a lot when he was a kid (gee whiz, like most of the American male population).

Also: that Pat has been *angry* a lot. Ooh, anger! and of course, since Pat is not only a Right-winger but hails from a designated oppressor group (White Male Irish Catholic), his *anger* can never be righteous *rage*, but only a reflection of a paranoid, status-anxious personality, filled with, you got it, "resentment." And sure enough, this week, January 13, the august *New York Times*, whose every word, unlike the words of the rest of us, is *fit to print*, in its lead editorial sets the Establishment line, a line which by definition is fixed in concrete, on Pat Buchanan.

After deploring the hard-edged and therefore politically incorrect *vocabulary* (tsk, tsk!) of Pat Buchanan, the *New York Times*, I am sure for the first time, solemnly quotes Bill Buckley as if his words were holy writ (and I'll get to *that* in a minute), and therefore decides that Buchanan, if not actually anti-Semitic, has said anti-Semitic things. And the *Times* concludes with this final punchline, so reminiscent of the Bell-Hofstadter line of yesteryear: "What his words convey, much as his bid for the nomination conveys, is the politics, the *dangerous* politics, of resentment."

Resentment! Why should anyone, *in his right mind*, resent contemporary America? Why should anyone, for example, going out into the streets of Washington or New York, *resent* what is surely going to happen to him? But, for heaven's sake, what person in his right mind, *doesn't* resent it? What person is not filled with noble rage, or ignoble resent-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment, or whatever you choose to call it?

Finally, I want to turn to the question: what happened to the original Right, anyway? And how did the conservative movement get into its present mess? Why does it need to be sundered, and split apart, and a new radical Right movement created upon its ashes?

The answer to both of these seemingly disparate questions is the same: what happened to the original Right, and the cause of the present mess, is the advent and domination of the Right-wing by Bill Buckley and the *National Review*. By the mid-1950s, much of the leadership of the Old Right was dead or in retirement. Senator Taft and Colonel McCormick had died, and many of the Right-wing congressmen had retired.

The conservative masses, for a long time short on intellectual leadership, were now lacking in political leadership as well. An intellectual and power vacuum had developed on the Right, and rushing to fill it, in 1955, were Bill Buckley, fresh from several years in the CIA, and *National Review*, an intelligent, well-written periodical staffed with ex-communists and ex-leftists eager to transform the Right from an isolationist movement into a crusade to crush the Soviet god that had failed them.

Also, Buckley's writing style, while in those days often witty and sparkling, was rococo enough to give the reader the impression of profound thought, an impression redoubled by Bill's habit of sprinkling his prose with French and Latin terms. Very quickly, *National Review* became the dominant, if not the *only*, power center on the Right-wing.

This power was reinforced by a brilliantly successful strategy (perhaps guided by *NR* editors trained in Marxist cadre tactics) of creating front groups: ISI for college intellectuals, Young Americans for Freedom for campus activists. Moreover, led by Veteran Republican politico and NR publisher Bill Rusher, the *National Review* complex was able to take over, in swift succession, the College Young Republicans, then the National Young Republicans, and finally to create a Goldwater movement in 1960 and beyond.

The cause of the present mess is the advent and domination of the Right-wing by Bill Buckley and the *National Review*.

And so, with almost Blitzkrieg swiftness, by the early 1960s, the new global crusading conservative movement, transformed and headed by Bill Buckley, was almost ready to take power in America. But not quite, because first, all the various heretics of the Right, some left over from the original Right, all the groups that were in any way radical or could deprive the new conservative movement of its much-desired *respectability* in the eyes of the liberal and centrist elite, all these had to be jettisoned. Only such a denatured, respectable, non-radical, *conserving* Right was worthy of power.

And so the purges began. One after another, Buckley and *National Review* purged and excommunicated all the radicals, all the non-respectables. Consider the roll-call: isolationists (such as John T. Flynn), anti-Zionists, libertarians, Ayn Randians, the John Birch Society, and all those who continued, like the early *National Review*, to dare to oppose Martin Luther King and the civil rights revolution after Buckley had changed and decided to embrace it. But if, by the middle and late 1960s, Buckley had purged the conservative movement of the genuine Right, he also hastened to embrace any group that proclaimed its hard anti-communism, or rather anti-Sovietism or anti-Stalinism.

And of course the *first* anti-Stalinists were the devotees of the martyred communist Leon Trotsky. And so the conservative movement, while purging itself of genuine Right-wingers, was happy to embrace anyone, any variety of Marxist: Trotskyites, Schachtmanites, Mensheviks, social democrats (such as grouped around the magazine *The New Leader*), Lovestonite theoreticians of the American Federation of Labor, extreme Right-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wing Marxists like the incredibly beloved Sidney Hook, *anyone* who could present not anti-socialist but suitably anti-Soviet, anti-Stalinist credentials.

The way was then paved for the final, fateful influx: that of the ex-Trotskyite, Right-wing social democrat, democratic capitalist, Truman-Humphrey-Scoop-Jackson liberals, displaced from their home in the Democratic party by the loony Left that we know so well: the feminist, deconstructing, quota-loving, advanced victimological Left. And also, we should point out, at least a semi-isolationist, semi anti-war Left. These displaced people are, of course, the famed neoconservatives, a tiny but ubiquitous group with Bill Buckley as their aging figurehead, now dominating the conservative movement. Of the 35 neoconservatives, 34 seem to be syndicated columnists.

And so the neocons have managed to establish themselves as the only Right-wing alternative to the Left. The neocons now constitute the Right-wing end of the ideological spectrum. Of the *respectable, responsible* Right-wing, that is. For the neocons have managed to establish the notion that anyone who might be to the Right of them is, *by definition*, a representative of the forces of darkness, of chaos, old night, racism, and anti- Semitism. At the very least.

So that's how the dice have been loaded in our current political game. And virtually the only prominent media exception, the only genuine Rightist spokesman who has managed to escape neocon anathema has been Pat Buchanan.

It was time. It was time to trot out the old master, the prince of excommunication, the self-anointed pope of the conservative movement, William F. Buckley, Jr. It was time for Bill to go into his old act, to save the movement that he had made over into his own image. It was time for the man hailed by neo-con Eric Breindel, in *his* newspaper column (*New York Post*, Jan. 16), as the "authoritative voice on the American Right." It was time for Bill Buckley's papal bull, his 40,000-word Christmas encyclical to the conservative movement, "In Search of Anti-Semitism," the screed solemnly invoked in the anti-Buchanan editorial of the *New York Times*.

The first thing to say about Buckley's essay is that it is virtually unreadable. Gone, all gone is the wit and the sparkle. Buckley's tendency to the rococo has elongated beyond measure. His prose is serpentine, involuted, and convoluted, twisted and qualified, until virtually all sense is lost. Reading the whole thing through is doing penance for one's sins, and one can accomplish the task only if possessed by a stern sense of duty, as one grits one's teeth and plows through a pile of turgid and pointless student-term papers—which, indeed, Buckley's essay matches in content, in learning, and in style.

The final, fateful influx: the ex-Trotskyite, Right-wing social democrat, democratic capitalist, Truman-Humphrey-Scoop-Jackson liberals.

Lest anyone think that my view of Buckley's and *National Review*'s role in the past and present Right-wing merely reflects my own "paranoid style," we turn to the only revealing art of the Buckley piece, the introduction by his acolyte John O'Sullivan, who, however, is at least still capable of writing a coherent sentence.

Here is John's remarkable revelation of *National Review*'s self image: "... Since its foundation, *National Review* has quietly played the role of conscience of the Right." After listing a few of Buckley's purges—although omitting isolationists, Randians, libertarians, and anti-civil rightsers—O'Sullivan gets to anti-Semites, and the need for wise judgment on the issue. And then comes the revelation of Bill's papal role:

"Before pronouncing [judgment, that is], we wanted to be sure," and then he goes on: was there something substantial in the charges? "Was it a serious sin deserving excommunication, an error

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inviting a paternal reproof, or something of both?'' I'm sure all the defendants in the dock appreciated the ''paternal'' reference: Papa Bill, the wise, stern, but merciful father of us all, dispensing judgment. This statement of O'Sullivan's is matched in *chutzpah* only by his *other* assertion in the introduction that his employer's treatise is a ''great read.'' For shame, John, for shame!

The only other point worth noting on the purges is Buckley's own passage on exactly why he had found it necessary to excommunicate the John Birch Society (O'Sullivan said it was because they were ''cranks''). In a footnote, Buckley admits that ''the Birch society was never anti-Semitic,'' but ''it was a dangerous distraction to right reasoning and had to be exiled. *National Review*,'' Bill goes on, ''accomplished exactly that.''

Well, my, my! Exiled to outer Siberia! And for the high crime of ''distracting'' pope William from his habitual contemplation of pure reason, a distraction that he never seems to suffer while skiing, yachting, or communing with John Kenneth Galbraith or Abe Rosenthal! What a wondrous mind at work!

Well, my, my! Exiled to outer Siberia! And for the high crime of ''distracting'' pope William.

Merely to try to summarize Buckley's essay is to give it far too much credit for clarity. But, taking that risk, here's the best I can do:

1. His long-time disciple and NR editor Joe Sobran, a Randolph Club member who is here tonight, is a) certainly not an anti-Semite, but b) is ''obsessed with'' and ''cuckoo about'' Israel, and c) is therefore ''contextually anti-Semitic,'' whatever that may mean, and yet, worst of all, d) he remains ''unrepentant'';

2. Pat Buchanan is not an anti-Semite, but he has said unacceptably anti-Semitic things, ''probably'' from an ''iconoclastic temperament,'' yet, curiously, Buchanan too remains unrepentant;

3. Gore Vidal is an anti-Semite, and the *Nation*, by presuming to publish Vidal's article (by the way, a hilarious one) critical of Norman Podhoretz has revealed the Left's increasing proclivity for anti-Semitism;

4. Buckley's bully-boy disciples at *Dartmouth Review* are not anti-Semitic at all, but wonderful kids put upon by vicious Leftists; and

5. Norman Podhoretz and Irving Kristol are wonderful, brilliant people, and it is ''unclear'' why anyone should ever want to criticize them, except possibly for reasons of anti-Semitism.

Gore Vidal and *The Nation*, absurdly treated in Bill's article, can and do take care of themselves, the *Nation* in a blistering counter-attack in its January 6-13 issue. On Buchanan and Sobran, there is nothing new, whether of fact or insight: it's the same thin old junk, tiresomely rehashed.

Something, however, should be said about Buckley's vicious treatment of Sobran, a personal and ideological disciple who has virtually worshiped his mentor for two decades. Lashing out at a friend and disciple in public in this fashion, in order to propitiate Podhoretz and the rest, is odious and repellent: at the very least, we can say it is *extremely* tacky.

More importantly: Buckley's latest encyclical may play well in the *New York Times*, but it's not going to go down very well in the conservative movement. The world is different now; it is no longer 1958. *National Review* is no longer the monopoly power center on the Right. There are new people, young people, popping up all over the place, Pat Buchanan for one, all the paleos for another, who frankly don't give a fig for Buckley's papal pronunciamentos. The original Right, and all its heresies is back!

In fact, Bill Buckley is the Mikhail Gorbachev of the conservative movement. Like Gorbachev, Bill goes on with his old act, but like Gorbachev, nobody trembles anymore, nobody bends the knee and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

goes into exile. *Nobody cares anymore*; nobody, except the good old *New York Times*. Bill Buckley should have accepted his banquet and stayed retired. His comeback is going to be as successful as Mohammed Ali's.

For Pat Buchanan's race for the presidency has changed the face of the Right-wing. It's now a brand new ball game. By his very entry, Pat Buchanan has changed and redefined the entire nature of the conservative movement. He has created a new radical, or Hard Right, very much like the original Right before *National Review*. For all their wealth, media influence, and seeming power, it is now the official conservatives and the neo-conservatives who are on the periphery. The Right-wing shall henceforth only be defined in relation to the Buchananite movement. That movement, neither kind nor gentle, now sets the agenda, and sets the terms of the debate.

Finally, we must ask: what are all the media elites—Leftists, liberals, centrists, official conservatives, neo-conservatives—what are they all afraid of? Why do they fear Pat Buchanan so much that they are desperate to smear him and divert attention from his ideas: from his attack on the welfare state, on taxes, on foreign aid, and on globaloney? It's very simple. Because they know full well that the *heartland*, the conservative activists and the conservative masses outside the New York-Washington corridor, that the *heartland is with us*.

That the heartland loves Pat Buchanan and responds to his ideas, the long-forgotten ideas that they know to be right but could never find articulated in the public arena. The heartland is with us, and the heartland, bless them, knows little and cares *less* about which variety of social democrat happens to be gaining or losing power inside the beltway. Yes, the status anxious, paranoid, deeply resentful, radical Right is back, and this time we're not going to succumb to the smears and the excommunications.

The *New York Times* says, in that anti-Buchanan editorial, that the Buchanan campaign is "underfinanced." Hah! As we say in New York, they should live so long! the truth is that Pat's campaign has gotten a phenomenal, world-record response to its fund-raising. Pat qualified for federal matching funds with record speed. And we see in the latest poll that Pat is moving up rapidly in New Hampshire against an increasingly punchy, testy, and visibly diminished George Bush. Pat Buchanan, and Buchananism along with him, is on the march. And sorry, Sidney Blumenthal, but tomorrow *does* belong to us! We are going to take up the theme of Tom Fleming's splendid article in the December *Chronicles*: we are going to shoot the elephant so that it falls on and crushes the donkey.

The heartland loves Pat Buchanan and responds to his ideas, the long-forgotten ideas that they know to be right but could never find articulated in the public arena.

When I was growing up, I found that the main argument against laissez-faire, and *for* socialism, was that socialism and communism were inevitable: "You can't turn back the clock!" they chanted, "you can't turn back the clock." But the clock of the once-mighty Soviet Union, the clock of Marxism-Leninism, a creed that once mastered half the world, is not only turned back, but lies dead and broken forever. But we must not rest content with this victory. For though Marxism-*Bolshevism* is gone forever, there still remains, plaguing us everywhere, its evil cousin: call it "soft Marxism," "Marxism-Humanism," "Marxism-Bernsteinism," "Marxism-Trotskyism," "Marxism-Freudianism," ...well, let's just call it "Menshevism," or "social democracy."

Social democracy is still here in all its variants, defining our entire *respectable* political spectrum, from advanced victimology and feminism on the Left over to neo-conservatism on the Right. We are now trapped, in America, inside a Menshevik fantasy, with the narrow bounds of respectable debate

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

set for us by various brands of Marxists. It is now our task, the task of the resurgent Right, of the paleo movement, to break those bonds, to finish the job, to finish off Marxism forever.

One of the authors of the Daniel Bell volume says, in horror and astonishment, that the Radical Right intends to repeal the twentieth century. Heaven forfend! Who would want to repeal the twentieth century, the century of horror, the century of collectivism, the century of mass destruction and genocide, who would want to repeal *that!* Well, we propose to *do just that.*

We *shall* repeal the twentieth century.

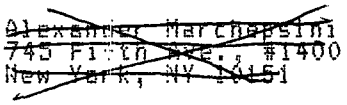
With the inspiration of the death of the Soviet Union before us, we now know that it *can* be done. With Pat Buchanan as our leader, we shall break the clock of social democracy. We shall break the clock of the Great Society. We shall break the clock of the welfare state. We shall break the clock of the New Deal. We shall break the clock of Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom and perpetual war. We *shall* repeal the twentieth century.

One of the most inspiring and wonderful sights of our time was to see the peoples of the Soviet Union rising up, last year, to tear down in their fury the statues of Lenin, to obliterate the Leninist legacy. We, too, shall tear down all the statues of Franklin D. Roosevelt, of Harry Truman, of Woodrow Wilson, melt them down and beat them into plowshares and pruning-hooks, and usher in a twenty-*first* century of peace, freedom, and prosperity. ■

The John Randolph Club was founded by the Rockford Institute, the Ludwig von Mises Institute, and the Center for Libertarian Studies to promote a new fusionism of paleoconservatism and paleolibertarianism. So successful was this, that the Club brought about the rebirth of the Old Right. The Club's third annual meeting will be Autumn 1992 in Chicago. For more information, write the *RRR.*

Rothbard-Rockwell Report
Center for Libertarian Studies
P.O. Box 4091, Burlingame, CA 94011

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
San Francisco, CA
Permit No. 1987



The Rothbard-Rockwell Report is published by the Center for Libertarian Studies, Post Office Box 4091, Burlingame, California 94011. (800) 325-7257. *Editors:* Murray N. Rothbard and Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr. *Contributing Editors:* Sarah Barton and Joseph Sobran. *Publisher:* Burton S. Blumert. *Managing Editor:* Sybil Regan. Subscription: $49 for 12 issues. Copyright ©1992 by the Center for Libertarian Studies. All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction of this newsletter or its contents by xerography, facsimile, or any other means is illegal.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED